

BLUES

Lyrics, Poems

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BLUES

Well it was early
In the morning
When the blues
Came falling down on me

I was sitting in my room alone
Playing a little now and then
Thinking of the places where I been
And of all the things I done

When the blues comes down on you
Man there's nothing you can say
You got to lie there thinking, praying
Just got to wait for a new day

The only other thing to do
Is pack your bag, get up and go
Hit the long road up ahead
You never know what you don't know

Well who's that walking
On down the road
Well looks like Maggie
But she walks too slow

Get that girl to treat me
Better than
Maybe we be getting somewhere
But I don't know when

Sure looks like
I got the blues on me
Don't know what to do
Might's well climb a tree

You know there's only
Two ways we can go
One is up and the other
I just don't know

All the walking I been doing
In this town
You'd think I'd be getting something for it
But I'm still looking around

Well here comes Maggie now
Well how do you know
Know her by her yellow dress
And her shoes down below

Well here comes Bud Russell
Pistol in his hand
And he comes to drag me
Back to Sugarland

Maggie come up walking
Paper in her hand
Hollering and crying
You got to free my man

And if you go to Dallas
You better steer it right
Got to never gamble
Got to never fight

Bud Russell he will get you
He will drag you down
And before you know it
You are prison bound

But Maggie she be coming
Coming at a run
And she bring my razor now
And she bring my gun

What do you have
When you ain't got no money?
Man you got nothing
And you know it ain't funny

I got this little girl
Want to show her the town
She looked into my pocket
Then looked me up and down

Had this little place
I wanted to call my home
Landlord said I owed him --
Time for me to roam

Don't know what to do
Every place I been
Nothing at all works out for me
Ever since I don't know when

Won't you tell me sugar mama
How is it that you look so fine
I see you walking, see you talking
Thinking how to make you mine

Don't know anything about you
Sure as hell am going to try
Sometimes when you look my way
Feel like I'm going to die

Going to buy me a new suit
Get a new hat and a walking cane
If you still don't pay no mind
No one here be seeing me again

You know there's one thing
That I got to say
Them walking blues come down on me
Just the other day

Now some folks saying
The walking blues ain't bad
Sure's the worst feeling
That I ever had

Got to take my bag out now
Got to get it packed
Going be going down that road and
Won't be coming back

Weren't nothing for me anyhow
In this town
Mean old place you know,
Everybody dogged me around

Well I just don't know why
I got the blues so bad
Got them coming down on me
Worst I ever had

Don't know what to say or do
Everything I do is wrong
Yea it's just the same old blue
And lonesome song

Everybody in this town
Been telling me just how to go
Seems like they all must been knowing
More than what I ever know

Some got all the luck there is
But me I don't got none
Don't know how it was or is
I know I got to get me some

One thing that I have got to say
Don't like being all so poor
One day's coming Judgment Day
Till then I'm drifting door to door

When first I start to hoeboing
My mother come with me down the yard
When I first start to hoeboing
My mother she done took it hard

She followed me down the yard that day
She was praying, Lord have mercy on my son
Lord have mercy now
Show him the right way

The wind was picking in the trees
Some kind of storm was coming on
Weren't nothing left at all to say
And it was time that I be gone

That's so long ago by now
I hardly can remember it all
I still can see my old dear mother
Standing in the doorway and she look so small

The wind is blowing in the trees
I feel it's time for me to go
Don't know where I'm going to be
Don't know who I'm going to know

They say there's always smiling faces
Waiting just to smile your way
But who knows what they're thinking of
Back of all the stuff they say

The road it's mighty long and dark
But there's no other way to go
Can't never tell what's going to be
It's something you can't never know

Yea the wind is in the trees
The river coming on to flood
I'm feeling like it's time to go
You know I feel it all in my blood

Now I'm rolling and rolling
And I'm long long gone
Well my money's real short
But my legs they're long

She is some kind of woman now
Put me out the door
Don't make no difference anyhow
Won't be back no more

Well it's a hard bad feeling
When you can't stay anywhere
No one you can talk to
And what happens they don't care

Whatever she be doing now
Coming all back around one day
May not know just when or how
But it'll happen some old way

But now I'm rolling and rolling
And I'm long long gone
My money won't be lasting
But my legs be lasting long

Corrinna Corrinna
Now let your hair grow long
I be back next summertime
If I don't stay long

Corrinna Corrinna
With your hair so black
Remember how it used to hang
All low down your back

Corrinna tell my mamma
I got all these years
Go down to the river for me
Cry out all your tears

Just meet me on the banks
Of the Brazos line
Down the banks of the big Brazos
Where I spend my time

O my rider's coming
He can blow his horn
Yes my rider's coming now
I won't be back for long

Go write my mamma now
Tell her to pray for me
So much time on the river
When will it ever be

And I see my rider
Telling me when she come
Going to bring my razor
Going to bring my gun

Captain don't you worry
I am a long time man
Captain say, don't worry boy
I will drive you down

Well I called my mamma
She couldn't talk to me
Walking with my rider now
When will it ever be

Used to weigh two hundred pounds
Now I'm skin and bone
Someday payday coming
To the hot spring I'm going

Well I asked the captain
Did the payroll come
He said don't be minding
It don't owe you none

Maybe payroll coming
Coming one day soon
If I ain't there for it
Captain know where I'm gone

Twenty-one hammers falling
They're falling all in line
All them hammers ringing now
But none can ring like mine

Hammer ring like silver yes
And it shine like gold
And they're ringing on an on
Let it all be told

Look how Maggie coming
Walking on down the road
Walking just so slow like
She carry a heavy load

Maggie say she love me
I believe it is a lie
She ain't come round to see me
Been since last July

Woman go wherever she go
In the day and in the night
Know that she don't love me none
Never treat me right

Well now I been on Brazos
Come down 1910
Bud Russell drove the women
Just like he drove the men

Been a long time now
Down on the Brazos line
Talking up to the captain
Captain doing fine

What you saying captain
What you going to say
But I'm looking for my rider
Going to come one day

Coming in the morning
Don't want to rise no more
Maggie come up walking
Rider come through the door

What you seeing rider
Where you going to go
Don't see nothing coming back
You know and I know

Preacher come to mamma
Mamma say help my son
But Maggie she bring my razor
And Maggie she bring my gun

The blues it is a lonesome feeling
Makes you sing a lonesome song
Every man that got the blues
You know he just can't last that long

The blues jump on him in the morning
Rides him till he go to sleep
Mostly he don't sleep but praying
Trying to get rid of the midnight creeps

Every man that got the blues
You know he just can't last that long
The blues it is a lonesome feeling
Makes you sing a lonesome song

John Lee setting on the rail track
Waiting on the midnight train
When it coming back
And the cold rain

Train coming back
And yet but it don't stop
Boy you gone drag and tote
Just until you drop

John Lee coming round again
John Lee coming round
Captain waiting with his rifle
Waiting with his hound

John Lee setting on the rail tie
And the sun down low
When they going to die
Nobody ever know

But John Lee is waiting
For the train come back
Don't know what and don't know when
Yes the night is black

I can see her walking
Rider come down the line
Calling somebody's name now
I believe it is mine

Maggie coming down the road
Laziest gal I ever see
Slow-walkin' I ever know
But she come for me

What you going to do
When the sun go down
Shining like an angel
Walking into town

Going to take my razor
Going to take my gun
Me and Maggie going
Walking off to the sun

Maggie got her natural eyes
Lord I do want to see
Long way off I can recognize
And she waiting for me

Going down the river
We're Alabama bound
Waiting till the captain
Don't come back around

Sun be setting in the trees
Wind is rocking the clothes line
Don't know where we're going
But that Maggie she be mine

Maggie is a real gal now
And you know she's mine
She's walking and she's coming back
Come rain come shine

Everything that Maggie's got,
Who done give it her?
Looking in the moonlight
You can't see that far

Her hair all hanging down
She's like a willow tree
Walking in the moonshine
And she coming for me

You know I got the blues on me
Yes I will tell you now
Thought about that girl I knew
Don't remember me anyhow

Waiting for the sun go down
Lord I am waiting here so long
Tell you what that girl be doing
Save it for another song

Mamma call, I answer ma'am
Say, boy you got to change your ways --
Said, Mamma well you know I am
--Or you'll have trouble all your days

Yeah the blues come down on me
And the train was going by
Thinking about that one old girl
Hung my head and cried

Didn't want to go to work
Judge he sent me down
Men come to the door one night
Rode me out the town

Sun be rising then it set
Lord have mercy on us all
Sun be ringing on the bars
Captain holler and the whistle call

Working every morning now
Who knows where it gone to end
Man who work on the chain gang
Got lots of partners but no friend

Going to write to Mamma
Tell her to pray for me
Long time on the river
Never will go free

Going to write to Maggie
Tell her I'm still alive
If she want to see me
Bring me a forty-five

Going to write to the preacher
Tell him to stay away
But I know my rider's coming
Going to come one day

Lot of women in the world
Lot of money
But you know I don't have
Either one

Some think it's sad,
Some think it's funny --
Me, I don't really know
Which one

Yea, you know I been wandering
Through the whole wide world
Don't really know
Which way to go
Worst thing I ever heard

Lot of money in the world
For me to be here all so poor
Don't know what I'm going to do
Don't want to be like this no more

Whisky and women
And I don't know why --
Been walking up and down
And walking through the sky

Whiskey and women
Done messed my mind
And they're running on ahead
Left me way behind

And here I am now
Down on my luck, way down
And you know it's a mean old
It's a mean old town

Nothing here at all
But where I been
Nothing here at all
But whiskey and women

Where you get
Your sugar babe?
You got it way down
On your daddy's farm

Come on along
And spend some time
'Cause you know I don't
Mean no harm

I got this little
Country shack,
It ain't much
But you know it's mine

Way far out
In the night so dark
Just me and you
Be dancing and doing fine

Well I'm standing at
The crossroads
Trying to get a ride
Flagged down

Standing here
On the dusty road
The street sign say
Get out of town

Either one will be ok
So long as it is out I go
The sheriff told me that himself
That's how I know

In the dark there is
Two ways to take
There's two trains running
All the time

Wherever she might be
Right now
Her old man he'll be
Crossing the town line

So I'm standing at
The crossroads
Trying to get a ride
Flagged down

Standing here
On the dusty road
The street sign say
Get out of town

You know when something's in you
You know it's got to all come out
You're ready to let it happen
Man you just want to shout

Mamma she don't like it much
Daddy he ain't been around
But you don't care 'cause you ain't there
You're not staying, you are out

And every man he's got know
There ain't no feeling in this world
So just take that one thing that you got
You know you can, you know you're hot

Those neon lights are bright
That is what they always say
You're walking in the cold cold street
But you can sing and you can play

But how to get it all together
Bring it all down to the man --
Sometimes it don't ever seem
A chance in hell you ever can

Well it was a mean old train
Took my baby away
Now you know she's really gone
She's gone away to stay

Every time I look
Down that lonesome road
I wonder when she's coming back
Won't come back no more

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place at one time for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan .

During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had various occasions to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and in form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself an eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object -- that is, an experience, a scene, an event -- to see it and feel it. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any language which remains merely language, merely words, is for me of no interest, in some cases it is actively negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this itself has a certain basic political significance, in the sense that awakened human beings will act and think differently than those who are at rest in the normal tranquilized non-perception that we usually are caught up in.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway -- worse than terrible, I really had no

clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself, by means of the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Over 2,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. My first models for the artist were people such as Picasso, Goethe, Bach -- artists who could work in a very wide range of forms and even use widely different styles. Of course, I can't compare myself to people like that, but it was still a goal, to try many types of things.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I am trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work -- Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

What were you trying to achieve with these pieces?

It was an attempt to use a traditional American poetic form. A popular form, in a sense. But I saw it as having an emotional depth, that I wanted to try to tap into.

About the Author

Steven Frattali is an expatriate American writer living in Taipei. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry, totaling over 2,000 pages of work. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*.

About the Banyan Press of Taipei

The Banyan Press of Taipei was founded in 2009 by Samuel Palmer and Steven Frattali. It plans to publish the work of expatriate Anglophone writers of the Pacific Rim who are working outside the norms of mainstream publishing. The Press does not at this time invite submissions, but it hopes to do so in the future.

